

- B1  
concl'd
- (a) hydrating 2-hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyronitrile in a sulphuric acid medium to produce 2-hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyramide, wherein the molar quantity of sulphuric acid relative to the 2-hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyronitrile is between 0.6 and 0.88, the molar quantity of water to 2-hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyronitrile is between 1 and 3, and further wherein the hydration is carried out at a temperature of less than or equal to 60°C and under vacuum; and
- (b) hydrolyzing the 2-hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyroamide in the presence of an additional quantity of water to produce 2-hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyric acid in a reaction mass.

- B2
23. (Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the hydrating step (a) is carried out at a pressure ranging between 0.01 and 1.0 bar.
- Self

REMARKS

I. Status of Claims

Claims 15-34 are pending. Claims 15 and 23 have been amended and an Appendix which indicates the corresponding claim amendments is attached. Specifically, claim 15 has been amended to indicate that the hydration of 2-hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyronitrile in a sulphuric acid medium to produce 2-hydroxy-4-methylthiobutyramide is carried out under vacuum. Support for the term "under vacuum" is found in Example 5 of the specification at page 18, lines 18-19, which indicates the first reaction is run under vacuum. Support for this amendment is also found